

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, February 11, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell Cambridge,
Sunday Feb. 11th My dear Mrs. Bell:

No Alec is not sick, at least he is about as well as could be expected with so many different matters pressing in and worrying him.

It is not the money which troubles Alec, the terms on which his father sent the draft are perfectly right. Alec expressly told you he was quite satisfied It is the misunderstanding about the types which has caused this worry.

My opinion is not worth much still I think I may be able to explain some things I think in the first place Mr. Bell misunderstands Alec's position toward Visible speech in America. Alec considers that his work here has been done for love of it, because he thinks it such a great and beneficent thing greater even than his own inventions and he is anxious to bring it into practical use. If he has made any money out of it, it was because he had to live. I am sure of this not only from Alec himself, but from what others have told me. Mr. Bell on the contrary thinks Alec has worked at his system for his own pecuniary advantage, Alec regarding his position as he does is not unreasonable in expecting his father to assist him in forwarding his own invention. Mr. Bell thinking as he does is right in seeing no reason why he should give his own hard earned savings to increase Alec's The trouble about the types has grown out of this misunderstanding. Mr. Bell thought in giving Alec the matinces he was assisting his son . Alec thought the gift was to him as d r i rector of the system in America. If Alec was to receive " a ha dn nd some return" from the sale of books he had no right to expect his father to pay the whole expense of procuring types. But Alec understood that the types were to spread the system of Visible Speech, his father and the printer to receive all money from the sale of books printed from them— thus Alec was not

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so very unreasonable in supposing his father would assume the whole expense. He thought also he had explained that not expecting pecuniary return he could not assist in the undertaking.

Now I have told you the principal cause of trouble so far as I can see. If I have said anything displeasing to you or Mr. Bell pray forgive me it is the last thing I intended, and if my "woman's wit" is not so sharp as you hoped, it is because I cannot help it. I have seen Alec again, he has a bad headache, is tired, and worn dreading his lecture on telephony in Salem tomorrow. Mrs. Sanders has kindly invited me to spend the night with her, so I shall be present at the lecture. I forrard a pamphlet which Alec forgot to send his father, it is a loan from the Essex Institute and must be returned.

I must not forget to thank you for the little ferns. They are lovely and I only wish I were at home and had a vase to put them into. Please give my love to Mr. Bell and tell him I am sure Alec did not mean to be insulting in his remark on writing their agreements, but I think it would be a good plan, Alec is cert i a inly not a good man of business and apt to forget the exact terms of any agreement unless written, and this would save much trouble.

With love to yourself, Alec will write when the lecture is over.

Affectionately yours Mabel